

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 RSR-01 /126 W

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R 161435Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8468

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: DESCRIPTION OF USE OF FORCE BY POLICE

AT ONDANGUA, OWAMBO

REF: PRETORIA 2881

1. FOLLOWING IS ACCOUNT BY RELIABLE SOURCE OF ACTION TAKEN BY POLICE AGAINST CROWD OF AFRICANS AT ONDANGUA MORNING OF AUGUST 15 (REFTEL).

2. CROWD OF ABOUT 3,000 PERSONS HAD GATHERED OUTSIDE MAGISTRATE'S COURT WHERE 15 MEN (OF THE 25 WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED ON POLITICAL CHARGES IN PAST THREE MONTHS) WERE APPEARING FOR FORMAL REMAND. THE CROWD, WHICH WAS ORDERLY, WAS TOLD TO DISPERSE BY EMMANUEL ELIFAS, BROTHER OF OWAMBO CHIEF MINISTER PHILEMON ELIFAS.

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WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, POLICE ATTACKED SUDDENLY

WITHOUT WARNING. POLICE PROCEEDED TO BEAT PEOPLE INDISCRIMINATELY WITH BATONS AND RIOT STICKS. THEY FOLLOWED MANY WHO FLED INTO NEARBY HOUSES AND BEAT THEM THERE. POLICE PURSUED THOSE WHO HAD RUN INTO BUSH, BEAT THEOSE WHOM THEY CAUGHT AND LEFT THEM LYING ON GROUND.

3. BULK OF CROWD REGROUPED AT AFRICAN RESIDENTIAL AREA. MEETING WITH SOME RESISTANCE, POLICE THREW TEAR GAS BOMBS, THEN RETREATED. PEOPLE SUBSEQUENTLY WENT TO MAIN ROAD, WHERE THEY THREW STONES AT PASSING CARS.

4. POLICE CONTINUED TO USE FORCE THROUGHOUT DAY, BEATING PEOPLE WHERE THEY FOUND THEM. IN ONE CASE THEY ASSAULTED GROUP IN A CAFE. TWO OF THOSE BEATEN WERE PREGNANT WOMEN AND ONE IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION IN HOSPITAL. OF THE 16 PERSONS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED, OVER HALF ARE WOMEN.

5. AS OF THIS AFTERNOON (AUGUST 16), 26 ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE, BRINGING TOTAL OF POLITICAL DETENTIONS IN SWA SINCE MAY 1 TO ABOUT 50. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE IN PRETORIA NEWS, FURTHER ARRESTS ARE EXPECTED.

6. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER REPORTED INCIDENTS TODAY. HOWEVER, ATMOSPHERE IN OWAMBO IS DESCRIBED AS TENSE. OUR SOURCE SAYS, "PEOPLE ARE HURT, RESENTFUL, AND ANGRY." SITUATION IS "HIGHLY INFLAMMABLE."

7. COMMISSIONER GENERAL FOR SWA, JANNIE DE WET, STATED TODAY THAT DISTURBANCES WOULD NO LONGER BE TOLERATED IN OWAMBO, AND THAT "IRRESPONSIBLE ELEMENTS" WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO "UNDERMINE, DISOBEY OR INSULT THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEFS, THE OWAMBO GOVERNMENT AND THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL." HE ALSO SAID CROWD AT ONDANGUA HAD NUMBERED 400 PERSONS INSTEAD OF 3,000 AS REPORTED BY PRESS.

8. APPARENTLY POLICE ACTION IN ONDANGUA WAS PLANNED IN ADVANCE. SWA COMMISSIONER GENERAL JANNIE DE WET FLEW TO PRETORIA EARLY THIS WEEK FOR HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATIONS.

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HE THEN RETURNED TO OWAMBO, WHERE HE REPORTEDLY HELD SECRET MEETING WITH HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS OF OWAMBO GOVERNMENT. ON TUESDAY, THE DAY BEFORE VIOLENCE IN ONDANGUA, REINFORCEMENTS OF BLACK POLICEMEN WERE SENT THERE. (HOWEVER, WHITE POLICEMEN WERE AMONG THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN VIOLENCE, AND POLICE CONTINGENT WAS UNDER COMMAND OF WHITE OFFICER.)

9. COMMENT: SOURCE SAID HE HAS INFORMATION THAT PRIME MINISTER VORSTER HIMSELF HAD GIVEN ORDER THAT FIRM MEASURES WERE TO BE TAKEN BY POLICE AGAINST PEOPLE OF OWAMBO, WHICH REGARDED BY SAG AS HOTBED OF SWAPO ACTIVITY. FEROCITY OF ACTION TAKEN CAN ONLY TURN OVAMBOS FURTHER AGAINST THEIR UNPOPULAR GOVERNMENT AND HEIGHTEN DEMAND FOR AN END TO SOUTH AFRICAN RULE. BOYCOTT OF ELECTIONS WAS CLEAR DEMONSTRATION THAT SAG-APPOINTED OWAMBO GOVERNMENT HIGHLY UNREPRESENTATIVE. FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF THIS HAS BEEN SHOWN BY REPORT WE RECEIVED TODAY OF ELECTION RESULTS. OF THE FOUR LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SEATS WHICH WERE CONTESTED, GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES LOST THREE.

10. DECISION TO USE FORCE AND MANNER IN WHICH IT EMPLOYED WILL HEIGHTEN OUTSIDE CONDEMNATION OF SAG'S RULE OF NAMIBIA. HOWEVER, FACT THAT VORSTER GOVERNMENT TOOK REPRESSIVE STEP AGAINST OVAMBOS SHOWS ONCE AGAIN THAT IT WILL USE WHATEVER MEANS IT DEEMS NECESSARY TO MEET WHAT IT REGARDS AS THREAT TO STATE SECURITY IN SA OR NAMIBIA, REGARDLESS OF CRITICISM AT HOME AND ABROAD. IN ADDITION, VIOLENCE AT ONDANGUA COULD PRESAGE ACTION AGAINST OUTSPOKEN BLACK NAMIBIAN OPPONENTS OF SAG, OR AT VERY LEAST SERVE AS DIRECT WARNING TO THEM TO REDUCE LEVEL OF THEIR ACTIVITIES AND SOFTEN TONE OF THEIR CRITICISMS. MORE THAN LIKELY, THOUGH, POLICE ACTION AT ONDANGUA WILL -- AT LEAST IN SHORT-RUN -- ONLY EXACERBATE TENSION IN NAMIBIA AND INTENSIFY OPPOSITION TO SAG.
SMITH

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